POLITICAL ISLAM IN THE
CAUCASUS

PANEL 2: POLITICAL ISLAM IN THE
NORTH CAUCASUS

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 22, 2012
WASHINGTON, D.C.

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Transcript by Federal News Service
Washington, D.C.
CORY WELT: Good morning. Welcome to the second panel of the day: “Political Islam in the North Caucasus.” I’m Cory Welt of the George Washington University. And today, we’ll have three leading experts on Islam in the North Caucasus to continue what has already begun as a very rich discussion from the first panel.

And what we’ve asked our speakers to focus on are an array of distinctions. Distinctions between Islamic practice and Islamic politicization, distinctions among regions in the North Caucasus, distinctions between different ideologies – both religious ideologies and nationalist ones – and distinctions between society and the state and hopefully also distinctions between past, present and future trends in the North Caucasus.

I’ve, as you can tell, lost my voice over the weekend. So I’ll be a quiet but firm moderator. We’ll ask our speakers to speak for about 15 minutes and then have questions. We have Geraldine Fagan, who is a Crapa fellow at the U.S. Commission for International Religious Freedom this year.

She is a journalist who has reported on religious freedom issues throughout the former – throughout the post-Soviet space, particularly Russia, for over a decade and is currently with the Forum 18 News Service.

Followed by Sufiyan Zhemukhov from Kabardino-Balkaria, as Tom mentioned in the first panel, who is currently a Heyward Isham visiting scholar at the Institute for European, Russian and Eurasian Studies at George Washington University, currently working on a project entitled “Diasporas, Genocide and International Law: Russia and the Circassian Community in the Context of the Global World.”

And finally, Sergei Markedonov, currently visiting fellow at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in the center’s Eurasian program, a very prolific and widely known expert on the Caucasus as well as the Black Sea region regional security, nationalism, interethnic conflicts and de facto states in the post-Soviet region.

SERGEI MARKEDONOV: Originally from Rostov-on-Don.

MR. WELT: And originally from Rostov-on-Don, and distinguished career in Moscow. So we’ll go in the order of the panel and we’ll start with Geraldine, moving on to Sufiyan and then finally Sergei.

GERALDINE FAGAN: Thank you, Cory. Hello. So, as Cory said, my approach to the whole subject of political Islam is really as a journalist reporting on the state of religious freedom across Russia – so across Russia as a whole, not just the North Caucasus. And there, I’m seeking to gauge what leads Muslims (to) abandon a principle – the principle of religious freedom and to turn to violence.
And what I'll do now is just summarize what I think are the key factors in this negative transition with a reference to explanations offered by Muslims themselves, state officials and also local scholars from across the North Caucasus.

And I hope it should now be obvious that what began in the early 1990s as a secular nationalist movement fighting for the republic of Chechnya’s secession from Russia had by 2000 morphed into a broader Islamist insurgency emulating international jihadism. The first key factor to understanding that conflict mutation is the shifting significance of Islam for the successive generations that fought in it.

So in the first Chechen war from 1994 to (199)6, combatants on the Chechen side were typically middle-aged and of a Soviet secular background. They were already hardened fighters before serious engagement with Islam. Chechen warlord Doku Umarov has admitted that he, quote, “did not really know how to pray before the conflict with Russia.”

As late as 2005, a year before he was killed, Shamil Basayev confessed: For me, it’s first and foremost a struggle for freedom. Sharia comes second.

The second wave of combatants joining the conflict from the late 1990s onwards was never allied with the Chechen nationalist cause. Being somewhat younger, they had typically taken advantage of opportunities to study theology in the Middle East following the collapse of the Soviet atheist regime.

Islamist ideology, not war or national sovereignty, thus became their primary motivation. Prominent insurgent Said Buryatsky, who’s so-called because he comes from the traditionally Buddhist republic in Siberia called Buryatia, wrote to a friend: You know, I don’t like fighting but I must adapt to my desires to the demands of sharia.

This generational shift points to what, I think, is the underlying cause of the Chechen conflict’s mutation into a broader Islamist insurgency: The impact of Soviet antireligious policy upon Islam in the North Caucasus, and that policy’s rapid demise.

Before 1917, Dagestan had 2,000 mosques; by the 1980s, only a few dozen. Even fewer mosques were permitted in Chechnya, Ingushetia, Kabardino-Balkaria and Karachay-Cherkessia, and none at all in Adygea. Moreover, Islam had taken root in much of the North Caucasus only towards the late 18th century and had still to supplant competing codes of highland etiquette prior to Soviet rule.
The subsequent Soviet repression of educated imams and isolation from the wider Islamic world meant that by the time of perestroika, much Islamic practice in the region had departed significantly from internationally accepted norms. There were even cases when village elders recited from Arabic academic journals, not understanding their content, in place of prayers. Alcohol consumption by those self-identifying as Muslims remains common.

And returning from study in the Middle East, those who later formed the second virulently Islamist generation of insurgents attempted to challenge entrenched local customs such as drinking alcohol, elaborate weddings and funeral wakes – as well as the Soviet era Muslim leaders who normally tolerated such practices.

This sparked conflict. Seeking to protect their authority, Muslim elders responded by branding critical younger Muslims foreign-influenced extremists, or Wahhabis, since they did not follow supposedly traditional forms of Islam.

Already in league with local governments, the established Muslim boards protected themselves from opposition from younger Muslims by securing narrow legal monopolies. Across the North Caucasus, it is impossible for Muslim communities to exist legally outside their structures, which also control appointments of imams.

In Dagestan, the Muslim board is unrepresentative even of local Sufism, being supported by only a minority of the republic’s Sufi sheikhs. It ensures an unofficial ban on certain literature, including Islamic authors freely available elsewhere in Russia, and Russian language translations of the Koran.

While many of the younger generation of North Caucasus Muslims returned from Islamic education abroad with Salafi leanings, they long tried to popularize these views peacefully. For the best part of a decade in Kabardino-Balkaria, associates Anzor Astemirov and Musa Mukozhev built up a jamaat network of Muslim communities to rival the established Muslim boards.

Jamaat representatives preached Islam throughout the republic, operated an unofficial institute of Islamic studies and even attended academic conferences in Moscow. The wider political situation in the North Caucasus meant that a collision of such initiatives with the Sovietized political and religious establishment was inevitable, however.

A former supporter of Astemirov and Mukozhev’s jamaat explained to me: If the state produces alcohol, if officials practice bribery, fornication, everything forbidden by Allah, and people who live according to Islam say you can’t do that, they see danger. There was an advanced tendency not to permit Islam because how they live is the complete opposite of Islam.
Poverty is often cited as another factor pushing young Muslims to join the North Caucasus insurgency. Yet there are numerous reports of college-educated professionals taking up arms, even sons and nephews of senior figures in the political and security establishments. The broader motivation for violent action is sooner indignation at the acute disparity between the lifestyle of ordinary citizens and the wealth flaunted by closed political elites across the region.

Their opulence relies upon endemic corruption. Local residents complain that key posts occupied by nonprofessionals with good family or other connections, that they have to pay bribes – not only – to traffic police not only to avoid prosecution for fabricated violations, but that they also have to utilize every stage – but also to utilize every stage of public education and healthcare.

At the same time, public infrastructure – schools, roads and hospitals – is in tatters. With no alternative paths to self-realization, imposition of an Islamic social order appears an obvious solution to some. Chechen separatist president Aslan Maskhadov noted the popularity of these views as early as 1997.

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He said: A simple paradigm of Islamic values accessible to ordinary Muslims has formed in the consciousness of a portion of the North Caucasus population – a certain matrix containing notions of a just, prosperous society in which they can attain personal wellbeing and general social stability.

When such aspirations began to threaten local elites, their response was to crack down on all forms of Islamic dissent. The example of Kabardino-Balkaria is particularly stark.

Local law enforcement agencies began to draw up lists of alleged extremists, or Wahhabis. Identification as such typically relied upon characteristics determined by the Sovietized local Muslim establishment, such as wearing an untrimmed beard, attending mosques particularly frequently and being critical of so-called traditional Islam.

Treatment of such people was brutal. Between 1998 and 2005, Kabardino-Balkaria’s counter-extremism police broke up prayer in mosques, beat up worshipers, forced them to drink vodka and shaved crosses in their heads.

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Young Muslims routinely reported torture in police detention, including being sodomized with truncheons and subjected to electric shocks. In 2005, even a local representative of Putin’s United Russia Party was detained. He recalled:

“Unlike the others, I wasn’t beaten. I was taken around offices and cellars and shown what they do to other detainees. People are tortured like in the Gestapo – no lawyers, no interrogations. They just beat them to the point of death until they confess and point to others.”
For some years, the reaction of those targeted was to seek legal redress by complaining to the interior ministry and public prosecutor at all levels. But this proved futile. In 2004, one young Muslim – Rasul Kudyayev – died from injuries he attributed to two days’ detention by special police. Hundreds responded by staging a protest in Nalchik, the capital of Kabardino-Balkaria.

Musa Mukozhev met with the republic’s leadership to demand that repression cease but was reportedly told that his jamaat must stop meddling in politics and join the official Muslim board. Most observers agree that the brutality of the state authorities, coupled with popular disillusionment in the judicial process, pushed some members of the jamaat towards violence.

It culminated in an armed uprising by several hundred against state agencies in Nalchik in October 2005 when over a hundred people were killed. Flimsy profiling of suspected extremists and compilation of so-called Wahhabi lists occurs across the North Caucasus. To the east, the situation has in recent years deteriorated to the point where suspects are detained, even if they have no obvious commitment to Islam. They are typically never heard of again.

The Russian human rights foundation Memorial estimates 3,000 such disappearances in Chechnya. In one case, successfully prosecuted in 2007, three Chechen policemen wishing to fast-track their careers by boosting the rates of terminating insurgents advertised prestigious police jobs. During interviews, applicants were dressed in camouflaged clothing, told to run and then shot dead.

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In southern Dagestan in 2010, I interviewed a market trader adhering to Salafism which he understood simply as the normal kind of Islam that there is in the normal civilized world. He described preemptive strikes by the law enforcement agencies similar to those in Chechnya.

If you’re Salafi, then you’re extremist, a potential terrorist. They say it’s just a question of time, that if not today, then tomorrow you’ll take up arms and kill. So we’re killing you in advance. One policeman told me: Why wait until you go into the forest and kill me from there?

Fear of preemptive action by the law enforcement agencies is now encouraging teenaged Muslims to go into the forest or join the insurgency in advance, as Dagestan’s recently created Commission for the Adaptation of Former Militants has been hearing. The militant core of the North Caucasus insurgency is certainly inspired by hard-line Islamist ideology emanating from outside the region.

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Having become the Caucasus Emirate’s key ideologist, Anzor Astemirov argued that support for its armed jihad is obligatory, citing fatwas by Saudi- and Syria-based sheikhs. Yet
it should not be assumed, as North Caucasus government officials often do, that all who studies in the Middle East returned with violent views.

One imam I interviewed recently in the Republic of Adygea in the west of the North Caucasus studied for years in the Saudi-run university in the United Arab Emirates, and also Syria. Asked about Chechnya however, he replied: I think it was a huge mistake that our Muslims allowed themselves to get involved in that conflict because those military actions are used by some for their own purposes. Their first aim is to weaken Islam, to show that this is the essence of Islamic ideology – war, blood, explosions, violence. People everywhere are afraid and don’t perceive Islam normally now.

Those labeled extremists due to their worship practices may also reject violence on theological grounds. Some Salafis in Dagestan argue that the territory of the North Caucasus does not form part of Dar al-Harb, where infidels must be fought, but Dar al-Sulh, where Muslims and infidels are to agree upon peaceful coexistence.

Nor should it be assumed from insurgent rhetoric that Islamist ideology is the principle factor driving Muslims into the forest. Residents of Dagestan do not believe so. Polled on possible factors by a local newspaper in 2010, nearly 60 percent cited corruption and the consequent impossibility of earning a living, 25 percent arbitrary punishment by the law enforcement agencies and only 10 percent factors linked to Islamist conviction.

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In fact, if there is a bright spot, it is that hard-line Islamist ideology has very limited popular appeal in the North Caucasus. The Kabardino-Balkaria jamaat was plausibly estimated to have 3,000 members, renowned for iron internal discipline and obedience to their leaders. Yet only a couple hundred took part in the October 2005 Nalchik uprising, as those leaders later complained bitterly on insurgent websites.

Local sociologists, polling religious attitudes in Dagestan in recent years, have found that over 80 percent reject the idea that sharia should replace the laws of the secular state. They include devout Muslims. As another imam in Adygea explained to me, in a village, there might be a thousand people. Of those, five pray. If they come to power tomorrow, they’ll say all women have to wear head scarves, all men have to wear beards and vodka is banned.

What will they do? Those 995 will start an uprising and overthrow them. And so, the caliphate is a utopia. The problem is not in the government. The problem is in the people.

Thank you.

[00:18:43]

MR. WELT: Thank you very much. Now, we’ll have Sufiyan Zhemukhov on the Circassians, nationalism and Islam.
SUFIYAN ZHEMUKHOV: Thank you. The topic of Circassians in Kabardino-Balkaria and the more – or wider, say, west North Caucasus were already introduced in the –

I will talk about the difference between nationalism in Islam – nationalistic and Islamic trends among the Circassians and more generally in western part of the North Caucasus, and the differences between political Islam in east North Caucasus and in west North Caucasus.

Nationalism was always stronger in west Caucasus and among Circassians than Islam. Historically, Islam came rather late to the Circassians, was less developed through the centuries, and Circassians were followers of Hanafi, Islamic school with milder regulations than Shafi'i, the Islamic school which is followed in Dagestan and Chechnya and marginally in eastern Caucasus.

Characteristically, during the Russian-Caucasian war in 19th century, the last Circassian state which existed in 1861-64 under the leadership of Kieren duk berzek (ph) was a nationalistic state. It has a nationalistic origin, while the imamate in the eastern Caucasus under the leadership of Imam Shamil had Islamic ideological base. Nowadays, Circassian nationalism does not integrate into Islam.

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Geraldine very well explained the transformation of the nationalism into Islamism in the eastern part of the Caucasus. And I would address the question how the development of nationalism and Islam among the Circassians is different from that in eastern North Caucasus and other – even other Islamic regions of Russia, and what caused those differences.

After the break of the Soviet state, nationalistic ideology prevailed among the North Caucasian ethnicities. In 1990s, ideological processes in the North Caucasus had similar patterns. Nationalism of ’90s culminated in the separatist movement in Chechnya and in the participation of Circassian nationalist movement in the Georgian Abkhaz War.

The development of Islam in 2000s took different patterns in western and eastern parts of the North Caucasus. The nationalism in east Caucasus became weaker and has transformed into the religious movement. Many leaders and participants of Islamic movement in the eastern part of the North Caucasus have originated from the separatist movement – nationalistic movement during (the) ’90s.

In the Circassian regions, both nationalist and religious movements developed separately, without integration. And the second wave of Chechen insurgence, with Geraldine mentioned, is related to the first wave of Circassian insurgence. The differences between the Circassians and Chechen volunteers participated in the Georgian-Abkhaz war in 1992 is characteristic for the case.

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Most of (the) Chechen volunteers who went to Abkhazia under the nationalistic ideology turned later into Islamic insurgents, including their leader, Shamil Basayev. However, the Circassian volunteers never changed their ideology and never became Islamic insurgents, including their leader Sultan Sosnaliev and Masaj Shanipav (ph).

The structure of Caucasus Emirate presents another example of different ideological patterns in the North Caucasus. Many emirate leaders from the east Caucasus have nationalistic background, including Doku Umarov, one of the founders of the emirate. However, none of the Circassian leaders have nationalistic background, including Anzor Astemirov, who was one of the founders of the emirate.

We can identify four more major ideological trends in the North Caucasus – a nationalist trend as well as a traditional and moderate and radical form of Islam. By radical Islam, I mean an ideology that suggests that the law and spirit of Islam should reach all spheres of society. This ideology is rather strict and judgmental of those who do not develop themselves according to the five pillars of Islam.

The followers of radical Islam are not inherently extremists, but within this ideology they might develop what we call an insurgency ideology. I interviewed several people who follow this radical Islam, and once I had a focus group interview of women who were followers of radical Islam.

And a question that I asked them was whom would you rather marry – a Circassian Christian or non-Circassian Muslim. And they answered that they would rather marry non-Circassian Muslim than Circassian Christian.

It is very characteristic for the view of radical Islamists among Circassians. The insurgent ideology is characterized by terrorism and extremist behavior. Such is the perception of the security forces as direct enemy, hostility towards Muslim leaders and scholars with different beliefs and regarding them as hypocrites promoting anti-Islamic ideology, and the exclusion of those who are not strict Muslims.

The religious leaders of moderate Islam usually oppose radical Islam and regard its followers as heretics. They openly support and are supported by state authorities. The authorities indeed regard the development of moderate Islam as one of measures against Islamic radicalization and insurgent recruitment.

As religious leaders publicly declare their support for moderate Islam and imams, the insurgents react by labeling those moderate leaders as treacherous imams. Moderate Islam expands its number of followers to include all who identify themselves as Muslims, whether or not they practice the five pillars of Islam.
For example, in an interview, Anas Pshikhachev, the former leader of the moderate Islamists in Kabardino-Balkaria stated, quote, “Everyone who acknowledges Allah, Koran and Sunna and the prophet is a Muslim, even if he does not observe any practices.”

By this interpretation, Islam is not a question of active faith but passive acknowledgement. The clash between insurgency ideology and moderate Islam culminated in December 2010 with the murder of Anas Pshikhachev. Another trend is represented by local scholars and intellectuals who understand traditional Islam – who promote traditional Islam, understand it as an ideology of local traditions mixed with Islam. It's not traditional Islam as it is wildly acknowledged as classical Islam, but traditional means – mix of Circassian traditions with Islam.

This ideology takes its historical roots in the strong moral codex of Circassians Khabza, which was established in the 18th century and based off philosophy of local intellectual Adiga Khabza, who was kind of a Circassian Confucius. The first debates between radical and traditional Muslims took place at the beginning of 19th century.

The prominent Circassian scholar Sultan Khan-Girei wrote in 1835 in his notes about Circassia that Islamic laws were supposed to give preferences to local customs. But the new generation of religious leaders of that time, quote, “often perform judgment by Islamic laws, thus breaking the old customs.”

Initially, the leaders of Caucasus Emirate did not share a common opinion toward traditional Islam. Some advocated radical methods including violence against civilians, which proved effective in the past – and those were more radical Islamists with nationalistic background, like Doku Umarov – while others supported a policy of targeted assassination against adherents of moderate Islam.

The fourth ideological trend in the North Caucasus is a nationalistic ideology. While in Chechnya and Dagestan, many insurgency leaders evolved from – evolved from nationalism into radical Islam; in Kabardino-Balkaria, as I said, these two trends almost never interact and even confront each other. None of the Kabardian nationalist leaders of 1990s ever tried to present themselves as devout Muslims.

On a larger scale, this can also be demonstrated by the fact that none of the thousand of Kabardian volunteers who participated in the Georgian-Abkhaz war were ever identified as supporting religious extremism or joining religious movement in Kabardino-Balkaria. At the same time, these Circassian volunteers meant to form a political movement by establishing a nongovernmental organization, the Union of Abkhaz Volunteers in Nalchik, with rather nationalistic program.

The gap between radical Islam and nationalistic ideology widened after the establishment of the Caucasus Emirate. The question is why the Circassian nationalism developed separately from Islam ideology.
I think there are two – there are two points why the nationalism doesn’t interact with Islamic – radical Islamism. The ideological processes – the first cause is that the ideological processes in the Circassian republics of Kabardino-Balkaria, Adygea and Karachay-Cherkessia are influenced by external factors, mainly by the existence of 5 million Circassian diaspora.

And we can see that the nationalist ideas – they develop – while in the eastern North Caucasus, the nationalism already – almost – in past, in the west North Caucasus among Circassians, we can see the second wave of the nationalism. And we can see that the Circassian nationalistic movement has a new generation of activists since 2005, after – and especially after Russia won the right to hold the 2014 winter Olympics in Sochi, which the Circassian nationalists see as the last capital of independent Circassia in 19th century.

And we can understand the importance of diaspora in the discourse of developing nationalistic ideology in the Caucasus by another example. When Doku Umarov, who was so-called President of Republic of Ichkeria, decided to transfer his ideology completely to Islamic values, he was opposed by Chechen diaspora, and by Zakayev personally, who claimed that the Chechen insurgency shouldn’t turn to Islamic ideology.

The second point why the nationalism is so strong among Circassians is because actually Circassian identity can never be based on – just on religion, and for example, on Islam, because Circassians are divided religiously.

Part of Circassians are Muslims, the majority – and minority is Christian. And the Circassian identity can be based only on nationalism. And we can see the Circassians in Kabardino-Balkaria, Karachay-Cherkessia and Adygea, we should look at them not from the patterns of Dagestan, Chechnya, and Ingushetia, where we have totally Muslim population, but from the patterns of Ossetians from Abkhazian and Adjara where we have the ethnicities divided between Christians and Muslims.

So we can say that the Islamic and nationalistic trends in western part of the Caucasus, including not only Circassians but Ossetians, Abkhazians and Adjars in Georgia, is very different and developing in different patterns than in east Caucasus. Thank you.

MR. WELT: Thank you very much. Now, we’ll turn to Sergei Markedonov on the Russian political response as to the question of whether Moscow has a policy in the North Caucasus.

MR. MARKEDONOV: Not only. Thanks, Cory. First of all, let me express my gratitude to Carnegie Endowment and personally to my friend, Tom de Waal, for invitation and for having me here as a speaker. Now, I am not in the terrific conditions because I am the sixth contributor today, and honestly speaking, I am feeling myself like (the) sixth husband of Elizabeth Taylor. But I tried to be original.
After the USSR collapse, the North Caucasus has survived the consequent change of two sociopolitical discourses – ethnic nationalism and political Islam. Speaking about ethnic nationalism, it’s necessary to take into account multifaceted character of this phenomenon. It could not be restricted only by analysis if Chechen separatism and this practice.

It’s impossible to oppose in a very simplistic way pro-Russian or anti-Russian character of ethnic nationalisms, not nationalism in the Caucasus. For example, ethnic nationalists in North Ossetia perceive themselves like advent post of Russia fighting against Ingush in the suburban district.

Dagestani nationalists defended Russian statehood in 1999, be it nationalists, ethnic nationalists in the period of raid of Shamil Basayev and Khattab. And in the case of political Islam, it’s necessary to come back to the term itself and to make some minor clarification. I think speaking about political Islam in the North Caucasus today, we need to speak about also multifaceted character of it.

It could not be restricted only by Caucasus Emirate and Doku Umarov. Many people like Ismail Berdiev, for example, or Bigiv (ph) could be seen very frequently with Vladimir Putin on the Russian T.V. programs. Do they speak on the language of political Islam? Yes, absolutely.

Said Efendi of Chirkey, for example, very popular prominent leader of Sufi Muslims in Dagestan. Does he speak on the language of political Islam? Does he pretend to increase Islamic way of life on the ground? Yes, absolutely. But he doesn’t relate to Salafi Muslims or to the Caucasus Emirate.

We could speak about some kinds of political Islam in the conditions of the North Caucasus. First, radicals identified with the Caucasus Emirate, Sufi Muslims in Dagestan – we could speak about separate version of political Islam and the conditions of Chechnya. It is based on Sufi tradition, but it is impossible to ignore in this context.

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Personal role of Ramzan Kadyrov, who does not relate to Salafi Muslims, who blamed Doku Umarov as his personal enemy, but at the same time, he provides real Islamization, not in theoretical frame but on the ground. It’s also political Islam.

This is why we could speak about pro-state or anti-state political Islam. It’s more important thing is not target of political Islam – against whom is it oriented, against a state or against another group or Muslim? It’s necessary to register discourse of the problem.

In the early ’90s, protest movements, nationalist or territorial conflicts were perceived through the nationalist discourse. For example, 30 percent of Ossets are Muslims. But it was not real obstacle for them to support Christian brothers against Ingush. Those conflicts were not perceived through the framework of sacred wars, wars and conflicts against infidels and so on and so on.
Nowadays, symbols of Islam, perceptions – sometimes they are not relating to real religious practice but perceptions, discourses, stereotypes are in the table, are in the active discussion. What’s the role of Russian policy in this shift from ethnic nationalism to political Islam, which includes – I am repeating once again – not only the radical form.

There is a very popular moral explaining this shift – especially popular in European Union countries, little bit later in the United States. But anyway, it explains this shift through the Russian policy – aggressive, suppressive as you like – to Chechnya. Russia state suppressed the de facto statehood of Chechen Republic – Ishkeria – and as a result, we have received radical form of Islam.

Is it true? Is it false? Half-half? It’s not complete truth. It’s not complete false. Because it’s necessary to understand that apart (from) Chechnya, there are growing different forms of political Islam and radical Islam which were not connected with case of Chechnya. Example of Dagestan of early ’90s – this practice was not connected with the Chechen statehood experience.

Or case of Malokarachaevski raion, which is close to Caucasian mineral waters to Kislovodok, 15 minutes by drive. Another case of Salafization, of Wahhabization of this region, another attempt. They were not connected with Chechnya. This is why. Speaking about the role of the Russian policy, it’s necessary to really understand. It’s one of the factors but it’s not the only factor.

What about other factors? Education – in the period of Soviet Union, ethnicity was promoted but religiosity was suppressed. Last mention of fight – political fight against Islam was related to 1986 – plenum of central committee of CPSU, 1986. This is why no real prophets, no real knowledgeable people, no educated people who could interpreted norms of Koran, five pillars of Islam and so on, so on.

But at the same time, many people who were brought up in the national academies of science, in the condition of nationalization of Communism, which were very strong, especially in the period of Brezhnev. This is why no people who could really raise the problem of Islam. And this is why in the early ’90s, Islam was used instrumentally in the political discourse.

One very funny story – maybe you are a little bit tired today. In 1991 in – (inaudible) Grozny – Dzhokhar Dudayev was asked a question about role of Islam in the history of Chechens. Dzhokhar agreed, yes, this role was great and we need to make namaz three times a day. He was interrupted – five times a day, Jahar. OK, but it would be necessary six times a day.
It was typically at that time. Now, we have another generation educated in different manner compared with Soviet time into early ’90s. More knowledgeable guys, educated in the Gulf countries, in Egypt, abroad. They may be incorporated deeper and better in the Islamic world, in the wider sense of this term.

They could speak on the subject, understanding the subject, not in favor to enlarge popularity of disappearing Communist Part and so on, so on, so on. Another cultural situation – it’s also important. As for the Russian policy, I think that it’s a problem to speak about Russian approach because we have no articulated, verbalized doctrine of North Caucasus policy.

Just today, after 20 years of the – from the USSR dissolution. I think that Russian policy to the North Caucasus political Islam could be splitted (sic) into different mosaic pictures or different puzzles. Let me name some of them. The first one – all Russian level of domestic policy. Don’t forget that abolition of direct elections of governors in 2004 was explained through instability in the Caucasus.

This is why the whole country became hostage of the Caucasus – trends, dynamics, even Far East region of Russia or Siberia. Many people in those regions don’t know about dynamics in the Caucasus – maybe in Washington, D.C., expert community knows this situation better than expert community in Grozny. I contributed many times in Siberian cities, sometimes we’re interrupted about what do you speak, it’s not interesting for us.

(Laughter.)

But my answer was very simple: Sorry, but drafting into the Russian army is not prohibited. Maybe this question would be very interesting for you personally, not from the abstract point of view but from your family personal point of view. But it’s another problem.

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Anyway, all Russian approach – approach to the region, to the Caucasus. I could – it’s not verbalized anyway – but I could characterize it like outsourcing remedy. It’s a delegation of prerogatives of the federal power on the ground. Their best case is Chechnya, but it’s not the only case.

I could speak about privatization of power in the local and regional level. And attention of the federal central is restricted only by two format(s) – security format and another format proposed by Alexander Khloponin. It’s called, like – so-called alleged economic. It means financial blowing of the region without any other context like transparency, like level and clarity of distribution of money and so on.

This is why it raises many speculations. You know, the slogan “stop feeding the Caucasus.” First of all, it’s very literal because the first recipient in Russia is Yakutia. Stop feeding Yakutia maybe, maybe. But it’s the way to splitting of the country. It’s the way which Soviet Union survive.

[00:48:36]
It’s not good for me and for other countries of the globe also. By the way, the sum of the whole transfers allocated for all Caucasian republics plus Kalmykia is less than sum allocated for road recovery for Moscow for 2012. This is why it’s necessary to know details. As they put it in Russian – (in Russian).

(Laughter.)

The third approach of Russia – religious – religious policy as whole and Islamic direction of this policy. We could speak about so-called traditional religions in Russia and amendments to the law of freedom of conscience adopted in 1996. The discourse of traditional religious groups is very popular in the Caucasus.

And we could see frequently when muftis or heads of spiritual boards of Muslims demonstrate their readiness to cooperate with the Russian Orthodox Church – in the case of Dagestan, in the case of Karachay-Cherkessia, as well as Metropolit Feofan representing the Russian Orthodox Church in the North Caucasus is a friend of this cooperation.

This is why we could see and could speak about one more discourse – traditional religious groups and the conditions of the Caucasus uniting Sufi Muslims, spiritual boards of Muslims and Russian Orthodox Church and some others, all others group.

The next Russian policy approach is anti-terrorism and anti-extremism. We could speak about maybe some ideological problems for Russian power because leaders of Russia blame terrorists like bandits. In my mind, it’s deadlocked, because in this situation, we could not understand real motivation of those terrorists. Bandits, OK, but they are not robbers – they are not, maybe, gangsters.

[00:50:57]

What about political motivation? Why this phenomenon is supported? Not by majority of people, by critical minority of the people. But anyway.

This is why we could speak about different puzzles or segments of the policy and absence of strategy of the Caucasus region development. Anyway, we need to go away from simplistic pictures. Tensions in the North Caucasus are not tensions in the format between federal center and Caucasus as a region.

There are many different lines in the Caucasus. Officials who are blamed by radical Muslims or moderate Muslims on the ground are not only ethnic Russians. They could be neighbors of this or that – OK, literal this or that political Islam group. This is why – summarizing – I think that political Islam, first and foremost, is a problem of formation or shaping of new post-Soviet identity of Russia.

Russia is not the USSR. Maybe it’s truism but it’s necessary to repeat these phrases, especially in the West, every day. It’s another identity. This identity is not shaped completely to nowadays. All countries of the post-Soviet space are in their course of
shaping. Azerbaijan, Georgia with problems of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Russia and so on.

[00:52:47]

Russian identity is not completely shaped. Political Islam is one challenges in this course, like ethnic nationalism mentioned by my friend and colleague Sufiyan, some other problems of regional particularism, especially in the cases of Stavropol or Krasnodar area and so on.

But first and foremost, it’s a problem of identity. And this problem is predetermined by absence of integration policy supported by the Russian state. It’s a problem. Because I’m not so stupid, naïve guy who really believes that we could overcome current hostility and violence very frequently, no. But I see the way of exit from this deadlock in the formation of integration strategy for the North Caucasus.

Russian case is not unique. All powerful contemporary states are multiethnic. Your states, United States of America, also multiethnic. And in the ’60s, problem of African-Americans was politicized. Now, it’s discussed. It’s very hard topic but it’s discussed only like social problem, not political. I see we could have this prospect for the North Caucasus if we would be so sophisticated in the integration policy-building, nation-building like United States after 1960s. Thank you very much.

MR. WELT: Thank you, Sergei, and thank you to all of the panelists. I’m sure there are lots of comments and questions from the audience. So we’ll go right to you, and just please briefly identify yourself when I call on you. In the back?

Q: Steve Winters, local researcher. I’d like this to Sergei Markedonov. Could you comment on Alexander Dugin’s ideas for dealing with the Islamic areas of the Russian Federation, whether they’re realistic given what’s actually happening?

[00:55:00]

MR. WELT: We’ll collect a few questions.

Q: Thank you. Yes, I’m Alexei Penov – Russian Service of the Voice of America. I have two questions. The first one is for Mr. Zhemukhov and it’s very simple. I was just wondering if you find the idea of a new Circassian republic in the North Caucasus realistic or not. I know that this is one of the slogans, one of the goals of the Circassian national movement. I just wanted to know your opinion on this.

And my second question is – very brief comment, refers to Sergei Markedonov’s presentation. Sergei, you mentioned the abolition of the elections of governors in the Russian Federation and you mentioned the situation in the Caucasus as an explanation for this move. But I just wanted to emphasize that that was just probably an explanation, not necessarily the real reason why the move was made.
In this context, I have this question. Do you really think that Russia – the current government of the Russian Federation does not have any Caucasian policy or doctrine because sometimes – I mean, I have an impression that there is such a doctrine which was – it was, for example, expressed by Mr. – (inaudible) – that all the national autonomies of the Russian Federation should voluntarily refuse their status and that Russia practically has to become a rather unitarian state with some cultural diversity. Thanks.

[00:56:45]

MR. WELT: Let’s get one more question. Wendy?

Q: Thanks. Wendy Silverman, Department of State. It’s interesting that a speaker on both panels noted the Islamization being fostered by the head of Chechnya, Kadyrov. And so it would be great if anyone interested, and in particular the person who mentioned this, could speak to what is the underlying factor, what is driving this. Thank you.

MR. WELT: You had the first question, so –

MR. MARKEDONOV: Thank you. Let me start briefly on Alexander Dugin. I am not -- honestly speaking, I am not considering Dugin as an expert. He is very talented, clever provocateur, yes, but no expert. He doesn’t make any field investigations, for example. He didn’t investigate sociological causes and so on.

He creates from time to time very interesting ideas, like creation of Russian forces in Georgia in the face of Natelashvili or Eurasian union between Turkey and Russia or recognition of Abkhazia by Turkey, China, and Syria. First and foremost, it’s necessary to study details of those mentioned countries. This is why it’s not so serious to understand.

[00:58:25]

Speaking about Muslim problem for Russia, I strongly recommend you to read the book of my friend Alexey Malashenko, “Islam for Russia,” because we are faced with great difficulties in identification. Who are we going to consider other Muslims? Because for Russian census, there are no special point of identification, your religious background.

This is why we automatically count all Tartars, all Bashkirs, all Chuvash – maybe not all but most of them – like Muslims. But it’s very, very simplistic picture. As for elections of 2004 and Russian strategy, I’m repeating once again – (inaudible) – for some other recommendations are not part of the formulated position of the Russian Federation.

I am also considering some comments of Vladimir Putin or some other politicians like conceptions, like formulated strategy. It’s opinion on one point or for another point. Many articles of Vladimir Putin, by the way, are very, very contradictory. His first article on the concentration of Russia was devoted to geopolitical priorities and foreign policy priorities of Russian Federation.

[01:00:02]
And one of key priority was Eurasian union with visa-free regimes and so on. The second article on the national question of Russia recommended to strengthen visa restrictions for our allies from Eurasian Union. What Putin is real Putin? It’s a question. It’s not a state-formulated conception. It’s electoral idea which could contradict to each other.

As for unitarian character of Russian Federation. No illusions; I am not sure that Russia in the early ’90s was the best pattern of federalism. Maybe it was kind of feudal federalism, yes. But it was not federalism because principles of vertical were realized in the case of Tatarstan, Bashkortostan – no democracy. It was vertical without center – horizontal, vertical – verticals.

When, for example, governor of Krasnodar region Kondratenko could prohibit the expert of corns or agricultural products in neighbor regions – Rostov-on-Don or Stavropol – is it federalism? It looks like medieval Germany. Sorry, it’s not federalism.

This is why we could speak about transformation at different modes of administrative market in the post-Soviet Russia. The first administrative market system was centralized in the period of Yeltsin. In the period of Putin, we could speak about centralization of administrative rents and administrative markets.

Before 2004, the cost of average campaign for governor’s election in Stavropol was estimated was 10 billion rubles. After 2004, that donation for the competition of governors was estimated at 50 billion rubles. Five times more. Believe me; I know what I say now. It’s a strengthening of statehood.

I am not sure of that, this is really strengthening of Russian statehood. It’s centralization of administrative rents. This is why in the first case of ’90s or in the second case of Putin we couldn’t speak about federalism. Declaration made in the Russian Constitution is no matter.

In Constitution of 1936 or in the Stalin period, many periods were also declared and many people, even in the West, characterized this constitution like democratic or one of the most democratic constitutions in the world. But in reality, you know about Stalin’s period in 1936 or 1937.

[01:02:57]

MR. ZHEMUKHOV: Well, thank you very much for this simple question. But my answer has to be rather complicated, because the issue of uniting Circassian regions into one Circassian republic is a very complicated issue. But you simplified the question for me asking is it possible or is it not possible.

So I will say that it is possible. And I will give you some reasons for that. Well, the question is we have three Circassian – three republics where Circassians represent so-called titular nations. The first one you can see on the – to the left of the map – Adygea. The second one is Karachay-Cherkessia, the yellow. And the third one is the green, Kabardino-Balkaria.
So this question is usually – the problem of unifying of Circassian republics is usually presented as a nationalistic trend that nationalists offer to unify the three republics. But in reality, it has – it is more complicated. It is a demand by the elites of Circassian republics. Long before the question of unification of Circassian republics became nationalistic problem, it was raised by the leaders of three republics.

And it was raised in 1990s. And in 1997, there was established inter-parliamentary council between Kabardino-Balkaria, Karachay-Cherkessia and Adygea. And this council had sessions every month. And (the) three government newspapers of Kabardino-Balkaria, Adygea and Karachay-Cherkessia quarterly had one issue which ran together – not only in Russian but in Circassian language, as well.

And it was believed, of course, all these activities, political activities were underground – or under the carpet, how (sic) Churchill would say – that the former president of Kabardino-Balkaria, Valery Kovkov, could become – could unit all three republics and become a president of Circassian republic. But with the new – with Putin as new leader of Russia, this trend was dropped.

It is not mentioned now that the three republics can unite. Instead of that, there are activities to merge Adygea into Krasnodar Krai. This is to separate the three republics. And these three nations – these three parts of Circassians were divided during Stalin's time – and not only divided but called different names.

For example, on this map, you can see the Adygea as one ethnicity and Kabardians as another ethnicity while Kabardia and Cherkessia are not represented at all while these three sub-ethnicities call themselves Circassians. And another point is that unification of Circassian regions into one republic isn't the only ongoing process or demand of unification.

We have the same from time to time – Chechnya and Ossetia raise question of reunifying. And North Ossetia and South Ossetia, they don’t say it openly of course, but because they have different status, North Ossetian and South Ossetian. But there are many talks in Russia going about unification of South Ossetia and North Ossetia.

And we remember that Shamil Basayev had idea of unifying Chechnya and Dagestan. And we have another project of unification called Caucasus Emirate. So these ideas of unification, they are not unique. But this unification – the problem of unification of Circassian regions into one Circassian republic is legitimate in the sense that those who promote it tried to put it into Putin’s policy of largening (sic), uniting the three Russian regions, so legalizing it.

So it may be among all of the processes going in the North Caucasus. This is the most, if you can say, legitimate course. Thank you.
MR. WELT: Geraldine, did you have anything to add on these questions, and particularly the question on Kadyrov?

MS. FAGAN: On Kadyrov, I could maybe comment that it seems to me that it becomes – that whole situation becomes clearer if you remember that there isn’t this clear dichotomy between foreign hostile Islam that seeks shariatization in the North Caucasus and a local form that doesn’t wish that, basically that particularly in Chechnya and Dagestan, there are Sufi leaders who also would like shariatization of their societies.

[01:09:31]

And I think – I think I’m right in saying that Kadyrov – that the mufti in Chechnya is his – who is his appointee was also the head of the sharia court in independent Chechnya – Ichkeria – and that Kadyrov’s father, Ahmat, when he was mufti – so this is before he came to an accommodation with the Russians – he declared jihad on Russia and called for every Chechen to kill 150 Russians.

So this basically – you can’t simply draw a line and say that just because they’ve come to an accommodation with the Russians, they don’t desire Islamization in their own societies.

MR. WELT: Another round of questions?

Q: Kenan Aliyev, Radio Free Europe. I have two questions. First, to Sergei Markedonov. With the elections coming – the Russian presidential elections – how important is Islamic factor in these elections? Maybe it’s not important, but if you can address in any way. And what is the secret of Putin’s popularity in Dagestan and Chechnya?

[01:10:48]

He always gets over a hundred percent – (laughter) – despite the fact that, you know, many in that region probably wouldn’t agree with his policies. And also, do you think that projects like Anzhi Makhachkala, this football team which is –

MR. MARKEDONOV: Is it Islam?

Q: No, it’s not, but do you think it can change the tone in this – you know, in that region where people see kind of one success story, suddenly one Dagestani team appears in Champions League and I don’t exclude that possibility maybe in two years. Do you think that can maybe – you know, the region’s success stories, that kind of success stories can change the tone in the region.

Recently, our correspondent came back from Derbent and he said the observation was about this: unemployment, corruption and huge disconnect between the population and the ruling elite. That’s question for you. And the question for the two of you, since you visited the region, we said that Circassian identity, it’s more about nationalism than Islam.
How does it transfer into reality? Do you have schools in own language, universities, newspapers, because that would be best example of kind of identity building in that country. For example, in Tatarstan, there is a huge movement now to ban a Tatar language in Tatar schools, which is quite controversial. Do you have similar kind of examples from that region? Thank you.

[01:12:28]

Q: Iwona Kaliszewska Warsaw University and GW visiting. I wanted to go back to Islamic state which was mentioned by Alexey Malashenko and Geraldine Fagan. Well, what occurred to me during my research in Dagestan and Chechnya, especially Dagestan and Ingushetia, is that because we say a lot of people are supporting Islamic state, a lot of people want to live in Islamic state or not so many people actually want that.

But what occurred to me from my research was that what they actually understand under an Islamic state is not a caliphate, but it’s a state which is just, which is not so much, as you just mentioned, the disconnected-like society and a lie which is not corrupt, first of all. So actually the state they want to live in is not so much different as the state – I don’t know, people protesting in Moscow would like to live in.

Of course, there is this religious factor but maybe we should not necessarily consider this religious factor as some obstacle towards integration. And maybe understanding better what people mean under Islamic state, what Salafi mean under Islamic state but not what they write on their websites, because what they write and what they state right away – but what they really understand – this differs. These are two different things.

Maybe that could help us understand how to integrate them into the society and how to make this process of integration quicker and faster than to make this essentialistic (sic) distinction between Islam and not Islam. Well, just this, and I just wanted to ask if you agree with that, that this kind of process is taking place. Thank you.

[01:14:20]

MR. WELT: There’s a lot of questions in there. So we’ll go back to the panelists. I’ll go backwards and start with Geraldine.

MS. FAGAN: On the language, just it’s more of a comment I suppose and maybe Sufiyen could comment. I was recently in Adygea and there, even in majority ethnic Adyghe areas, I was told that – so you might have a school where basically everybody is Adyghe but the tuition is all in Russian and they weren’t allowed to have education in Adyghe. And I don’t know if that’s something new or from the Soviet period, like a holdover.

And I completely agree with what you just said about attitudes. In Dagestan, there’s quite a lot of quite interesting work being done by local sociologists about attitudes to shariatization of Dagestani society, which I’ve read, and also interviewed the sociologist. And what he said was initially if you ask people – so something like 50 percent or more will – maybe slightly more – will agree that Islam should be as it was in the times of Mohammed.
So you think, yeah, they’re obviously kind of die-hard Salafis. But the more detail is introduced into the questioning, the more it becomes apparent that in fact they’re simply desiring social justice and they don’t actually have any clear theological understanding of what an Islamic society might be like.

[01:16:03]

MR. ZHEMUKHOV: Well, if you take the language as an indicator of development of nationalism, then we can say that it is fully developed in all three republics. For example, all three republics have daily newspapers, in Circassian and Balkar language and Karachay. In the elementary schools in the county area – not city area but in country areas – they teach all subjects except of Russian language, all other subjects – and maybe even Russian language they teach with Circassian language.

And then in the fifth grade – in the fifth grade, they start teaching all the subjects in Russian. And the Circassian language is a state language that is in courts. You can give testimonies in your own language. You can speak in your own language at state institutions, et cetera. But as Geraldine said, it isn’t practiced very much. I once was at a court where a witness tried to speak Circassian language and they denied him that right. Not denied – they said, yes, you have right, but we ask you to speak in Russian. So they persuaded him to speak in Russian.

And but if you think in the terms of how popular is Circassian, you can see that Russian is much, much more popular. And the recent trend in the state policy toward the language is that they tried to undermine it. They tried to undermine the teaching language at schools. It was in 1992, at the revival of nationalism, when the Circassian language was represented in elementary school.

And there was so-called regional component three hours per week. And there is, now, programs at school and at the universities to abandon this so-called regional component, three hours of school – and reduce the Circassian language. So this is a very controversial issue about language which you can say which direction it will go. Thank you.

[01:19:06]

MR. WELT: Before Sergei talks about the 110 percent popularity of the government in Dagestan and Chechnya could you say something about attitudes towards the central government and Putin in Kabardino-Balkaria and other regions?

MR. ZHEMUKOV: Well, the attitude of the population in Kabardino-Balkaria, Adygea and maybe in North Ossetia as well toward the central government is different from Dagestan and Chechnya. While you have 99 percent of support, for example, during state Duma elections – recent state Duma elections – in Kabardino-Balkaria and South Ossetia, the votes were equal to Moscow region.

So it’s a very different trend, but of course you can say that the local governments totally support Putin, and if there is, like –
They will be forgeries for United Russia and Putin; they will take place equally in Kabardino-Balkaria, Adygea and Karachay-Cherkessia. But you can say that the trend is very different.

For example, in Kabardino-Balkaria, there was a demonstration similar to the demonstration that took place in Sakharov Square on the same day. It wasn’t that big as there. But anyway, so we have more – and there are several groups among the elites in Kabardino-Balkaria and Adygea and Karachay-Cherkessia which are rivals, which for example you can say about Chechnya.

But there are many rivals in Dagestan of course here. So I think that Kabardino-Balkaria, Adygea and Karachay-Cherkessia will support Putin during the elections but not on the same scale as Chechnya.

MR. MARKEDONOV: Thank you. I received not one question from you but three, within one. Let me start on current electoral campaign. I’m not overestimating the importance of religious factor. Until now, Vladimir Putin has not prepared any special articles on religious question or religious development in the country. He has stressed only the national question. It demonstrates that for him, nationalism and challenges of ’90s – (inaudible) – is much more important than any dangerous religiosity.

In the context of electoral campaign, we could note the meeting of Russian leaders with representatives of so-called religious factions – Judaism, Buddhism, Islam and Russian Orthodox Church. It’s typical. They demonstrated their support to Vladimir Putin as a national leader, OK. I think it’s not so close to real situation. Real picture is not too covered, as usual.

Your question about Putin’s supporting the North Caucasus republics, it’s not so simple. And it seems from the first sight. It could be divided into some points. On the one hand, I absolutely agree with result like 99.9 percent, which is far from reality because there are no transparency on the ground, no real control and so on and so on.

But it doesn’t mean that in Chechnya, Dagestan and Ingushetia we could not find many people ready to vote for Putin. You raised question which is going beyond the Caucasus. Speaking about Russia in the electoral campaign, I could propose you such hypothesis: We could speak about three Russias within one. One Russia is a Russia represented by big cities with population of million people or extra.

They are oriented on the West. They integrated in the West, people with – highly educated persons and traveling frequently and so on. But we have also the second Russia, budget Russia. This Russia is dependent from so-called stability. They are oriented not on development with risks but on stability. They are our citizens. They are not bad. They are not lower quality than people living in Moscow. And they are ready to vote for Putin.
I could disagree with them but it’s very substantial percentage. In my mind, in my personal mind, real support of Vladimir Putin in all Russian level is 39, 40 percentage. But it’s people really ready to vote for Putin, not due to administrative resource, not due to call from the telephone. In order to exclude any questions, I am not going to personally vote for Putin.

[01:24:57]

But it’s necessary to understand reality. Rallies in Moscow and St. Petersburg – it’s not real reaction of all people in Russia. It’s impossible to restrict attitude to Putin by attitude of Nemtsov, Ryzhkov, and so on. It would be great mistake, analytical mistake, not political – methodological and analytical. Many people with pension and salary - $200 to 150 (dollars) – are prefer to vote for stability.

Maybe they look like stupid people, like very naïve people – yes, yes and yes, but it’s reality. Democratization process in Russia would take a lot of time. It would not be direct flight from point A, authoritarianism, to point D, democracy. Transit condition would be and could be very long. Let’s see the experience of Latin America. Two hundred years after Spanish went away, and what?

This is why in Russia, it’s – as they put it in my country – (in Russian). And the third Russia is rural Russia. This Russia thinks not about Putin, Medvedev and so forth. It thinks about whether tomorrow may be prices for corn, tomatoes and so on. It’s another Russia. But it’s part of very mosaic country.

This is why many people in Chechnya compare current situation not with principles of 1776, but with principles of 1789 and French Revolution standards. They compare realities of Muscovite and realities of Kadyrov and Putin. Many of them reality understand the price of it and cost of it. But they prefer stability, maybe very primitively understood and perceived.

But it’s necessary to understand and not to oversimplify the situation. As for Anzhi, I’m not sure that this case story – case story – success story would be enough. I leave here and for my travels in the Caucasus with guys representing the Caucasus sports. They also told me plenty of things about mountain skiing, slopes, and so on and so on.

[01:27:18]

It’s good. But it’s necessary to resolve problems of political risks. If you are private owner, if you are ready to be investor, would invest money in the region with acts of terrorism, whether corrupt officials? No. It’s your choice. This is why we could have deal only with the state investment.

But state investment are dangerous potentially due to corruption. It’s vicious circle. This is why a success story with Anzhi is not enough. It’s good, maybe, but seen on some skills of Anzhi they look like administrative market not only in the framework of one social club.
Question of Iwona – very good question. I think your question could be divided into two frames – anthropological and political. I think we could speak about very, very different and maybe fragmentized motivation of radicals.

Yes, some of them are ready to build Muslim state. But not only. I think many people are ready to support radicals because of not great love to any radicalism values and so on.

[01:28:53]

Because they see in their everyday life failure of the state, of the state order. They could not make complaints. They could not have civilized quarrel with your neighbors. No possibilities to be defended by militia, by the way. But it’s necessary to have any orders. This is why they began thinking and begin thinking about alternatives. There is an alternative on the ground. It’s necessary also to take into account operation of your thoughts.

Many people don’t know, really, what price would they pay for Islamic order. They see failed Communism practice. They see failed post-Soviet practice, corruption and so on. And they want to leave, to overcome troubles existing on the ground – like corruption, like primitive defense of your kids, of your family, of your home and so on and so on.

This is why they try to fill the vacuum existing now. I think responsibility first and foremost is in the hands of the state because it’s necessary to build the order. This is why I'm not sharing very primitive approach of many so-called liberals, who say, no, state-like, maybe night keeper, and so on. OK, but not night keeper or night guard must not sleep. He must or she must work.

In the case of the Russian state, we have many failures. I think we could speak in many cases about situated Islamism. Maybe you know that history of the Russian civil war and the revolutions. Many former Russian generals, like Manargem (ph) for example, like General Krasnov, created their statehood not because of great love to separatism.

General Krasnov was the Cossack general who was loyal to the Russian Empire and so on. But he created the Don Cossack Host. Why? In order to defend, to keep the order in the conditions of the Bolshevik house created by the revolution.

[01:31:10]

In the case of the Caucasus, we could find the similar motivation. People try to keep the order, social order and the conditions of disturbance, disorder and so on. This is why the anthropological answer on this question sometimes could be different from the political.

ALEXEY MALASHENKO: May I ask to add a short observation to what you told? I agree with you but –

MR. MARKEDONOV: Not completely.
ALEXEY MALASHENKO: No, no. Indeed, it’s some appendix. First, don’t forget about the elections, the last elections in Ingushetia. Officially, if I am not mistaken, 85 (percent) of the population came to vote. Unofficially, and I believe this is official information, something about between 16 and 18 percent.

So it means that Putin or Edinaya Rossiy (United Russia) are supported in Ingushetia. It’s a secret. Then there is a problem of South Ossetia, the recent events. I think I know about it. We also know that there was a certain impact of the situation in South Ossetia on the rest of Caucasus. And people in Dagestan – for instance, in Kabardino-Balkaria – they asked themselves if Ossetians they dared to vote – well, a little bit against official Moscow position.

[01:33:15]

Why not? Why we can do the same? So indeed, it created some problems for federal and local administrations. Next, let’s imagine the situation in Dagestan. There is a certain Islamic party. Even if this Islamic party is loyal to Putin, how many votes this party could get during last elections?

I think much more than Edinaya Rossiy. And besides, there is a problem in Caucasus which is vividly discussed. What I mean? There are two options. One option is we can create – we must create some Islamic space inside, in the frontiers of Russian Federation, and this idea is shared by majority.

And the second option is while we have to create independent Islamic state and separatism and so on. So I think that in the future, if the situation doesn’t change in Caucasus, indeed we’ll get something similar to Islamic space inside secular state.

[01:34:48]

However, Putin or somebody else may be well – some dozen years – will come instead of him. I think it’s one of the key problems for the region, because I don’t believe the next morning we’ll get – we’ll receive a normal secular – not a state, but republic maybe in Dagestan or in Chechnya and so on.

So just I totally agree with you when you say that the situation is very flexible and sometimes not so primitive as in Moscow they want to present it. Thank you.

MR. WELT: Question in the back?

Q: Rich Kauzlarich, from George Mason University. One subject that hasn’t come up yet in either panel has been organized crime, and I wondered if this panel would care to comment on that as an independent phenomenon in the developments that you’ve been describing or is it just part of the administrative centralization – or the centralization of administrative rents.
And second, to pick up on Kenan’s question about Tatarstan, to the extent that
you’re familiar with what goes on there, how are trends there different than what you’ve
described in the North Caucasus, regarding Islam and nationalism?

[01:36:32]

Catherine Cosman: Just if Sergei could follow up on his rather colorful phrase of
outsourcing of sovereignty and how that relates to some of the disturbing information that
Geraldine brought up about the roundups of Muslims for various reasons and in some cases,
you know, obviously unjustified from a security perspective but then the overlap with
genuine security concerns. Who decides those tactics? Is it outsourcing or not?

MR. WELT: Other questions?

Q: John Iskander, Foreign Service Institute. Geraldine, one of the quotes that you
had from – I think it was Buryatsky – you said, I don’t like fighting but we have to adjust to
sharia. And so adjusting this – you know, saying I don’t want to do this but now with this
sort of Islamic ideology.

And so, I understood you to be taking that at face value. But to what extent – given
the discussion that you just had with the professor from Warsaw University, to what extent
might you reinterpret that as being sort of a new ideological frame for doing something that
is in fact a same – a similar thing, right, rather than being fundamentally different because of
the Islamic ideology.

To what extent do we over-ideologize, I guess, something that is perhaps more
grounded sociologically?

[01:38:11]

MR. WELT: I don’t think Sufiyan has gone first yet, so.

MR. ZHEMUKHOV: Well, about the organized crime, the fate of organized crime
in the North Caucasus is very bad, if you can put it in such words, because the organized
crime in the North Caucasus is caught between two very strong forces. One is the policy in
the North Caucasus became very strong because the police and FSB and military, they are
strengthened to fight against the insurgents. So they can very easily to go after organized
crime.

From the other hand, the insurgents, just to show how they effective, they opposed
organized crime as well. And for example, the insurgents are more organized. They are like
brothers. It’s like brotherhood while organized crime is less organized. It is believed that an
insurgent can give his life for his brother while a criminal can’t give his life for his criminal
brother.

So because of these two very strong forces which both are against crime, the
organized crime is very low actually in the North Caucasus. For example, in 1990s, there
was this – there was these actions underground in the republic where I’m from, in Kabardino-Balkaria, which are similar to what later happened in Georgia.

[01:40:16]

That is, they tried – there was this process of extermination of leaders of organized crime. And several leaders were just killed by the government forces without investigation because they were believed organizers. That’s the picture with this issue. Thank you.

MR. MARKEDONOV: Let me start on outsourcing sovereignty. Yeah, you catch the contradictions between the role of civility and the political processes in the Caucasus and role of regional elites. Yes, I’m not sure that all pictures in all republics of the North Caucasus are all the same. Situation is Chechnya is not the same even in Ingushetia or even in Dagestan.

But in the case of Chechnya we could speak about absolutely shaped model of outsourcing sovereignty, because federal center behaves in this situation like dog which is wagged by the tail. No drafting to the Russian army, no real control of political activity of Ramzan Kadyrov, violations of the Russian Constitution, I mean here, direct appointment of local muftis and so on.

Many things are made without the control of Moscow. In the case of Dagestan, do you remember case of Radechenko, who was proposed by the head of taxpaying agency in Dagestan. And this appointment made by Moscow was blocked by the Dagestani elites – inter-ethnic elites, by the way.

[01:42:21]

In this situation, Lezgins and Avars cooperated together in order to block this appointment of Moscow. Is it real vertical of the power? Is it real authoritarianism? I’m not sure this is authoritarianism. If we would speak about the Moscow policy only in the format of security, maybe. We could speak about very strong presence of Moscow in the region.

But security format is not enough. As for integration, migration, education and so on – many, many other aspects are not really controlled. This is why my criticism is devoted first and foremost not against the extreme presence of the Russian state, but extreme absence of the Russian state.

Russian state is existing in the North Caucasus only in two formats, siloviki and discussion about one more, two more regiments deployed in Nalchik or Nazran or counterterrorism.

All money, financial aid from the Moscow side, no more. And it’s outsourcing sovereignty in reality. In this situation, Russian troops are used by local elites for defense of their business interests and support of their business contacts with Moscow guys in administration and so on and so on.
It’s not the state interest. I’m repeating once again. As for Tatarstan and comparison between this republic and North Caucasus, I think the most important thing here is the lack of integration. In the case of Tatarstan and Bashkirtia, we could speak about five centuries of integration. There is a tradition. There is another identity. There is a great experience of coexistence.

Let the Caucasus live inside of Russia five centuries more. Maybe we will speak about successful Caucasian model of coexistence between Muslims and Christians and so on. But more sophisticated policies are required, at least like policy exited in the imperial times, and maybe in the Soviet. Soviet policy could be criticized and I am some – I myself critical to this policy.

But it was ideologically consistent. It was understandable from the level of CPSU Central Committee to average shepherd. In the case of current Russia, no.

Articles by Vladimir Putin are brilliant but it’s not enough – for integration, for elaboration of new political identify of Russians, not Russian in the ethnic sense but Russian in the political sense. You know about differences in the Russian language – rossiiiskii, russkii – in the English one term, in the Russian language two different.

We need to speak about political identity. It’s a very, very complicated process. It couldn’t be restricted only by a special operation, there or here. Sometimes special operations are required. But it’s not enough.

MR. WELT: Geraldine?

MS. FAGAN: OK, so just in response to the question about Sayeed Buryatsky. I wonder whether it’s possible to over-ideologize Said Buryatsky. But what I was saying was that I wouldn’t say that he’s necessarily representative of the entire insurgency.

But what I would say is that for his – for that generation of militant leader, Islamist ideology is the main – is the core motivation whereas for their predecessors. They already – they were already fighting before they turned to Islam. And I think that’s a really crucial difference.

And I would also just say that I’m not entirely sure what you meant by a sociological basis. But in his case as well, he came from – I’ve seen the street where he lived. He came from a very ordinary Soviet background in Siberia. And so I don’t really see any kind of social reasoning that would lead someone from there to take up arms. And it’s really a long process of engagement with Islam and radical Islam and studying in the Gulf region, so.

MR. WELT: Well, we’ve come to the end of our panel. So if you could please join me in thanking our panelists for a very stimulating discussion. (Applause.) Thanks to the Carnegie Endowment and to Tom de Waal for putting on a great morning of sessions.
THOMAS DE WAAL: And we’ve got some lunch outside.

MR. WELT: And there’s lunch outside. Thank you.

(END)